DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 180 540 JC 800 018

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TITLE Fall 1978 COM 080 "R" Grade Follow-Up. Research Report 79-5.
INSTITUTION Essex County Coll., Newark, N.J.
PUB DATE Dec 79
NOTE 11p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement: Basic Skills: Communication Skills: Community Colleges: English Instruction: *Enrollment Trends: Failure Factors: *Grades (Scholastic): *Grading: *Junior Colleges: Performance Based Education: *Remedial Courses

ABSTRACT

At the completion of the fall semester, 1979, a study was conducted at Essex County College to determine the status of the 182 students who had received an "R" grade in a basic communications skills course (COM-080) in fall, 1978. The "R" grade is given to students who have made progress in a developmental course, but who have not attained "C" level competency and are, therefore, required to repeat the course. Of the 182 students who received an "R" grade: (1) 48% repeated COM-080 the following semester: (2) 2% repeated it after dropping out for a semester: (3) 18% did not repeat the course, but instead took a course in English foundations (ENG-089): (4) 5% took a course in college composition (ENG-101): (5) 3% took an English as a second language (ESL) course: and (6) 5% took no English courses. Of the 88 students that re-enrolled in COM-080 during the winter 1979 semester, only 38% successfully completed the course, 30% received an "R" for the second time, 14% received an "F", and 16% withdrew. Of the students that enrolled in the more advanced English courses without faculty permission, only 15% successfully completed ENG-089 and 33% successfully completed ENG-101. All students enrolled in the ESL course successfully completed it. The implications of these findings are discussed in the study report as they relate to the question of retaining or discontinuing the "R" grade. (AYC)

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ESSEX COUNTY COLLEGE

Office of Institutional Research

Research Report 79 - 5

FALL 1978 COM 080 "R" GRADE FOLLOW-UP

DECEMBER, 1979

Prepared by:

J. Scott Drakulich

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INTRODUCTION

In August of 1979 an evaluation of COM-080 was prepared by the Office of Institutional Research. Both the COM-080 faculty and the members of the president's Senior Staff requested that the Office of Institutional Research prepare a follow-up study of students receiving the "R" grade. This report is a result of that request.

METHODOLOGY

SUBJECTS - The sample for this study consists of 182 students who received an "R" grade in COM-080 during the Fall 1978 semester.

INSTRUMENTATION - All data was collected from the students' transcripts.

PROCEDURE - Transcripts were requested in October 1979. The information from the transcripts was analyzed in November.

RESULTS

The data in Table 1 indicates the status of the students as of the Winter 1979 semester.

Table 1

Status of Students Who Received R Grade Fall 1978

N = 182 (approx. 35 percent of all COM-080 students).

Status	N	%
Took COM-080 again 27879	88	48
Took COM-080 when returned	4	2
Did not return as of 27879 or 17980	31	17
Did not take any English	9	5
Took ENG-091 27879	32	18
Took ENG-101 27879	9	5
Took ESL-089 27879	5	3
Other	4	2
Total	182	100

The results indicate that of the 182 students who received an "R" grade in the Fall 1978 semester, some 31 students (17 percent) dropped out and did not return to Essex County College as of the Fall 1979 semester. Of the students that did return, the largest number, 88 (48 percent) took COM-080 again the Winter 1979 semester. Four students (2 percent) repeated COM-080 during the Fall 1979 semester after dropping out for one semester. Thus, a total of 50 percent of the students repeated COM-080. Of those who returned for the Winter 1979 semester but did not repeat COM-080, 32 students or 18 percent of the total took ENG-091, 9 students or 5 percent took ENG-101, 5 students or 3 percent took ESL-089 and 9 students or 5 percent did not take any English. It should be pointed out to the reader that some students may have tested out of COM-080 the first part of the Winter semester and were then placed in another English course. Therefore, one cannot assume that all the students who took an English course other than COM-080 during the Winter 1979 semester did so without the advice of the COM-080 faculty. In particular, any of the students who took ENG-091 many have been advised to do so. Unfortunately, records of those who may have legitimately tested out of COM-080 were not available for this study.

Table 2 presents the grade distributions of the students who took COM-080, ENG-091, ENG-101 and ESL-089 during the Winter 1979 semester. In all cases the sample size (N) and percent receiving a particular grade is reported. For example, of the 88 students who took COM-080 again, 12 students or 14 percent

Received a B, 21 students or 24 percent received a C, etc.

Table 2

Grade Distribution of Students Who Took COM-080, ENG-091, ENG-101 and ESL-089

Grade	COM-080		ENG-091		ENG-101		ESL-089	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
A	0	0	1	3	1	11	0	0
B	12	14	1	3	0	0	2	40
C	21	24	3	9	2	22	3	60
D	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
F	12	14	12	38	3	33	0	0
R	27	30	5	16	0	0	0	0
I	1	1	1	3	1	11	0	0
W	14	16	8	25	2	22	0	0
No Grade	1	1	1	3	0	0	0	0
Total	88	100	32	100	9	99	5	100

Looking at the grade distributions for COM-080, it is important to note that only 38 percent of those students taking COM-080 a second time successfully completed the course. Some 30 percent received an R for the second time, 14 percent an F, and 16 percent withdrew. Of those students who took ENG-091, only 15 percent successfully completed the course, 38 percent received an F, 25 percent withdrew, and 16 percent received an R. Proportionately, more students successfully completed ENG-101 (33 percent) than ENG-091. However, the small sample (9) prohibits a statistically valid comparison to be made. With regard to ESL-089, all five students who took this course completed it successfully.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results indicate that many of the COM-080 students (26 percent) who received an R grade did not repeat COM-080. Instead they registered for ENG-091, ENG-101 or ESL-089. This percentage should be considered somewhat inflated as it is possible that students tested out of COM-080 and legitimately registered for ENG-091 or ENG-101. Nevertheless, there is some evidence that it is possible for students who receive an "R" grade in COM-080 to register for ENG-091 or even ENG-101 without faculty approval. This implies that stronger controls need to be established to assume that the students register for the appropriate course.

The above implication is supported by the academic performance information in Table 2. More specifically, only 15 percent successfully completed ENG-091 and only 33 percent successfully completed ENG-101. Students who took ESL-089 all completed the course successfully. This indicates that perhaps these students should have initially taken ESL-089 instead of COM-080.

With regard to those students who actually repeated COM-080, it is important to note that only 39 percent of these students received an R grade a second time. The faculty should decide whether or not these students are going to benefit from repeating COM-080 a third time. Perhaps these students should consider an alternative to ECC such as Adult Education Programs.

Of all the students who took COM-080 and received an "R" grade only 17 percent did not return to college. This attrition rate is low when compared to an overall between semester attrition rate of

approximately 33 percent. Perhaps the "R" grade has encouraged (or not discouraged) the student to remain at ECC and continue their education. Unfortunately, the student repeating COM-080 appears to have only a one in three chance of passing the course.

This author is aware that the Academic Standards Committee was considering dropping the "R" grade. Prior to the publication of this report, the information in the tables was shared with the committee and the Dean of Academic Development. The data in this report is not complete enough to make a formal recommendation regarding the use of the "R" grade. For example, the use of the "R" grade in other courses was not examined. On the positive side it appears the use of the "R" grade does encourage students to remain at ECC. In addition, it is a non-punitive grade which appears to be an asset to the faculty by increasing their grading options.

On the negative side it appears that registration controls are lacking as many students did not repeat COM-080. Overall, these students did not succeed in their ENG-091 and ENG-101 course indicating that they indeed needed COM-080. Also, the fact that students only have a one in three chance of passing COM-080 the second time they take it warrants a closer pedagogical review of the use of the R grade in that course.

In conclusion, the use of the R grade needs much closer monitoring. Effort should be made to assure that the students who receive an R grade actually repeat the course. In addition, the pedagogical soundness of the R grade should be investigated as two-thirds of those who receive it do not successfully complete COM-080 on the second try.

GLOSSARY

This glossary is provided for readers outside the College who may not be familiar with our grading system or course discriptions.

The Grading System

The grading system is:

Grade	Interpretation	Grade Points Per Credit
A	Superior	4.0
B	Good	3.0
C	Satisfactory	2.0
D	Passing	1.0
F	Failing	0.0
I	Incomplete Grade denotes student was passing course, but did not complete course requirements. After four months or one semester, the original "I" will be recorded as an "F."	0.0
W	Withdrawal Grade denotes official withdrawal from a course or from the College.	0.0
AU	Audit Grade denotes student was not enrolled in course for credit.	0.0
R	Repeat Grade is given to students who have made progress, but have not attained "C" level competency in developmental courses.	0.0
CR	Credit Grade reserved for special courses and courses passed by examination and indicates satisfactory completion of a course.	0.0
NC	No Credit Grade is reserved for special courses and indicates competence has not been demonstrated for reasons other than academic failure.	0.0

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS

COM-080 - Communications 080

This is a basic communication skills course organized around sequential units of reading and writing instruction. During the first week, an individual learning prescription is prepared for each student, based on thorough diagnostic testing in reading and writing. Students will work individually, under the guidance of the instructor and the tutors, on a variety of programmed, self-initiated exercise material in reading, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and usage. In addition to the individual work, students will participate in small-group discussions of reading assignments, attend lectures on writing techniques, maintain daily journals, and read extensively outside of class.

Contact Hours - 6 (non-graduation) (Included in the 6 contact hours are 3 credits of individual work, assisted by tutors.)

ENG-091 - English Foundations I

Syntax and paragraph writing are taought through principles of rhetoric, mechanics and style. Critical thinking is developed throughanalysis of student compositions and short essays by professional writers. The student's writing experience will culminate in the production of a number of multi-paragraph themes.

Contact Hours - 4.5 (non-graduation) (1.5 of the 4.5 contact hours are devoted to tutoring by the instructor and/or tutor.)

ENG-101 - College Composition I

Expository writing is taught through principles of rhetoric, mechanics and style. Critical thinking is developed through analysis and discussion of selected essays. Introductory library procedures are taught. Prerequisite: ENG 091 or placement.

Contact Hours - 3.0 credits

ESL-088 - English Conversation for Speakers of Other Languages

This is a beginning course for speakers of other languages. The course requires no backgound in the English language. Extensive language laboratory work is an integral part of the course. Aspects of American life and culture will be discussed. The course will be conducted in English.

Contact Hours - 4.5 credits

COURSE DESCRIPTIONS(cont'd)

ESL- 089 - English as a Second Language I

This is a course for students who are learning English as a second language at the level with some background in the English language . Equal emphasis is given to all four language skills: Listening comprehension, speaking, reading and writing. The skills necessary for the formation of correct sentence patterns and brief narrative paragraphs will be taught. Extensive language laboratory work is an integral part of the course. Aspects of American life and culture will be discussed. The course will be conducted in English. Prerequisite: ESL 088 or placement.

Contact Hours - 4.5 credits

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